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THE "A.L."

No. 135.
(Seventh Edition.)

BRIGHT STORY READERS.

Imso 567

Grade III.

The Enchanted Horse,

AND

The Story of Prince Ahmed.

(ARABIAN NIGHTS.)

Re-told by J. B. MARSHALL, B.A.

Printed in Great Britain.

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காரைக்குடி

நன்கொடையாளர் .....

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THE ENCHANTED HORSE.

CHAPTER

THE PRINCE'S DISAPPE. NCE.

IT was, in olden times, the custom for people to come on New Year's Day to the court of the Persian king, then held in the city of Shiraz,* and to show him what curious things they had invented during the past year. Then he would reward them, according to the cleverness of their inventions.

2. At the close of one New Year's Day, when the king was about to withdraw from the assembly in the great square before the palace, thinking he had seen everything that was to be shown him, an Indian drew near the throne, leading an artificial horse, saddled and bridled, and so much like life that, at first sight, it was taken for a real horse.

3. Having bowed very low to the king, the Indian said, "Sire, I pray you to look at this artificial horse; for, though you have seen many strange and curious things to-day, you have seen nothing so wonderful as this."

"It is certainly very like life," answered the

* Pronounce *she-rdz'*—*e* as in "enough"· *d* as in "father."

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king, "but another skilled workman could probably have made it even better."

4. "I commend it to your notice, sire," said the Indian, "for very much more than its natural appearance. The fact is that, if I want to go anywhere, I have only to get on this horse, and it will, in next to no time, carry me through the air to that very spot."

"I must have proof," rejoined the king, "before I believe such a statement as that."

5. The Indian instantly mounted the horse, and asked the king whither he should go, in proof of what he had said.

"You see that mountain," said his majesty, pointing to a very high one, which stood some nine or ten miles away. "Fetch me a branch from a palm tree that grows at its foot."

6. The words were hardly out of the king's mouth, when the Indian turned a peg which was in the horse's neck, a little above the saddle. Up rose the horse to a great height in the air, and the Indian was very quickly lost to view.

7. In about a quarter of an hour he was again seen overhead, with the required palm branch in his hand. Before coming to the ground, he gave a display of horsemanship which greatly pleased all the onlookers. He then came down to the spot from which he had started, got off, and, with another low bow to the king, laid the branch at his feet.

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8. "I am obliged to you," said the king, "for this very interesting performance, which puts the truth of your statement beyond question. Now, if the horse is for sale, I should like to buy it."

9. "Permit me to make known to your majesty," replied the Indian, "that I did not buy this horse. I had it from the inventor and maker, in exchange for my daughter's hand in marriage. And he made me promise that I would never dispose of it for money, but only in exchange for what I might desire."

10. "Well," said the king, "you are doubtless aware of what rich and well-peopled countries are under my rule. Choose which one of them you like; and I will make you ruler over it, with a suitable income, for the rest of your life."

11. The courtiers looked at one another, as much as to say, "What a splendid and right royal offer!"

"Pardon me, sire," was the Indian's reply, "but there is one condition, and one only, on which I can part with the horse; namely, that the princess, your daughter, becomes my wife."

12. The proposal was so impudent that the courtiers burst into roars of laughter. But Prince Firouz Schah,* the king's eldest son and heir, felt that such an insult to the royal family of Persia was no laughing matter, and he was extremely angry.

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* Pronounce *fe-roos' shä*—*e* as in "enough"; *oo* as in "moon"; *ä* as in "father."

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13. The king, however, was longing to obtain the horse, and felt that he would not so very much mind parting with his daughter, if he could have it. He paused to think what answer he should make to the Indian.

14. "Sire," exclaimed the prince, perceiving this, "you surely cannot hesitate to reject with scorn the proposal of this base fellow—this juggler, this mountebank, who dares even to think of marrying into the family of one of the greatest kings in the world."

15. "It is a horse of the rarest quality, my son," replied the king, "and I should be sorry if it got into the hands of some other monarch, which it would do most likely, if I refused it. Before we settle terms with the Indian, I want you to try the horse, and then you will be better able to judge of it for yourself."

16. The Indian gladly agreed to this, and began telling the prince how to manage the horse. But Firouz Schah was impatient; he leapt into the saddle, put his feet in the stirrups, and, without waiting for the Indian to tell him anything more, he turned the peg in the horse's neck just as he had seen the Indian turn it when about to set off.

Away he went, up, up in the air, with the speed of an arrow shot from a strong man's bow; and in a few moments he was no more to be seen.

17. With a loud cry the Indian cast himself at the foot of the throne. "Ah! blame me not,

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great king," he cried out. "The prince was in such a hurry to be off, that he did not give me time to tell him how to turn the horse when he wants to come back. He will go on and on, for he knows nothing about the other peg. But I beseech you, just king, not to blame me for any mishap that may befall him, for it will be all owing to his own impatience."

"You scoundrel," said the king, now in hot anger, "if you had not given him all necessary directions, why did you not call him back?"

18. "Your majesty," answered the Indian, "you must have seen at what a rate he rose. It took my breath away; and when I could call out, he was far beyond reach of my voice. But, sire, the case is not hopeless. If the prince examines the horse, he *may* find the other peg, by turning which he will cause it to come down; and, by guiding it with the bridle, he will be able to alight wherever he thinks proper."

19. "At any rate," said the king, in stern tones, "if in three months the prince does not return, or I do not have trustworthy news of his safety, you shall pay for it with your head. Meantime you are a prisoner."

20. Then the Indian was seized by the king's guards, and he was put into prison; and that New Year's Day closed very mournfully at the Persian court, because of the loss of Prince Firouz Schah.

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CHAPTER II.

THE HOSPITABLE PRINCESS.

1. And now let us see what became of the Prince Firouz Schah.

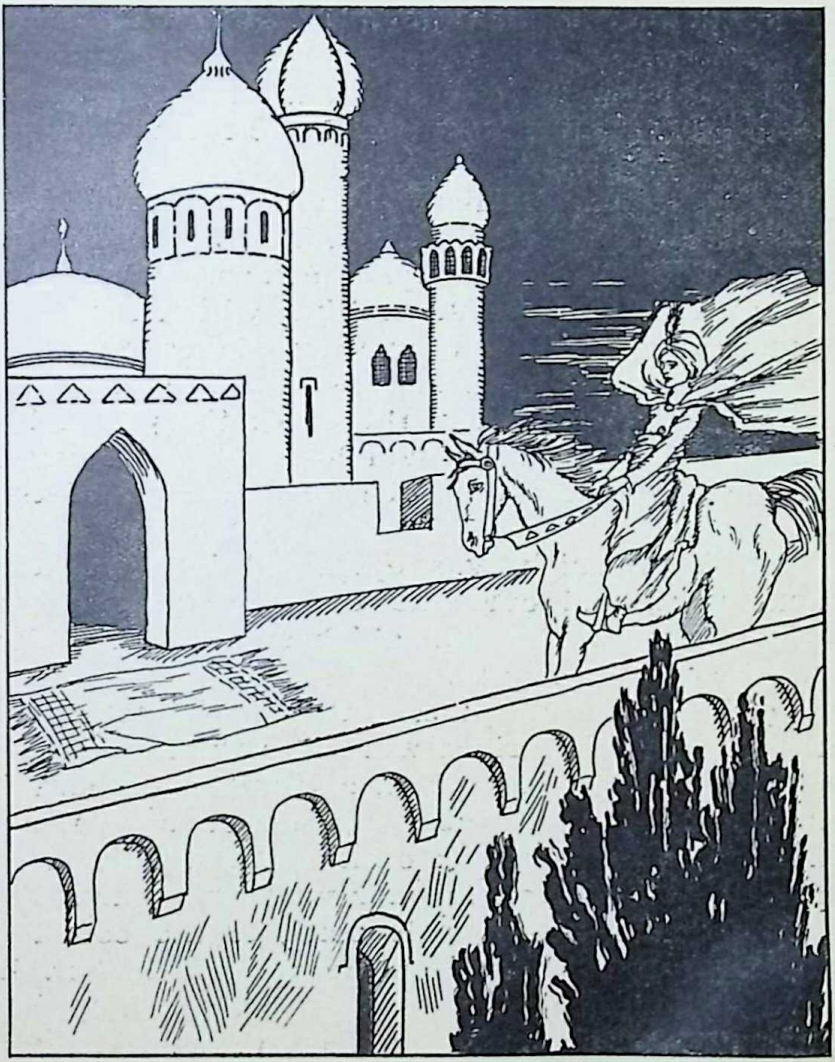
In less than an hour he had gone so high up that, when he looked down on the earth, he could not make out the mountains from the valleys; this being so, he thought it time for him to return.

2. He supposed that he would be able to do so, if he turned the peg the reverse way, and guided the horse with the bridle. To his dismay, no matter which way he turned this peg, he still kept on rising.

3. Though fully aware of his danger, he kept his wits about him, and looked carefully over the horse's head and neck, to find, if possible, some other contrivance, by which the continual upward flight could be stopped.

4. By diligent search, he discovered a smaller peg near the right ear; and as soon as he turned it, he began to come down to earth, though not so fast as he had gone up.

5. It was past midnight, and very dark, when the horse stopped, and Firouz Schah alighted. To his surprise he found himself on the roof of what seemed to be a palace. Looking about, he noticed a flight of stairs which led down into the palace, and the door at the top was standing ajar.



'He found himself on the roof of what seemed to be a palace '- -*Page* 6.

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6. The prince went down the stairs very quietly and carefully, lest he should awaken anybody; and he came to a landing, where a door was open, giving entrance into a large room, in which was a light.

7. Here he stood listening for a time, and heard sounds of snoring within. When he entered, he found several negroes lying asleep, each with a drawn sabre alongside of him, which made the prince suppose that they were slaves on guard before the apartment of some royal lady.

8. This was, in fact, the case; the prince had come to the palace in which dwelt the Princess of Bengal, eldest daughter of the king of that country.

A door, which was open, led into an inner apartment, and over the doorway hung a fine silken curtain, through which streamed the rays of a very bright light.

9. Walking on tiptoe, so that he did not arouse the negroes, the prince went into the inner room. There were, as he found, a number of beds in it. One of them was made up on a sofa, and here slept the princess; on the others, which were placed on the floor, lay her waiting women.

10. Firouz Schah stole softly to the couch of the princess; and, when he looked at her, he was so charmed with her matchless beauty that straightway he fell in love, for the first time in his life.

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11. He went on his knees, and gently drew the hand of the princess towards him. She opened her eyes, and, as may be well imagined, was greatly surprised to see a handsome and richly dressed young gentleman kneeling beside her. But she had no fear; or, at any rate, she gave no sign of being afraid.

12. The prince bowed his head to the floor, and then, raising it, he said—

"Great and beautiful lady, be it known to you that I am son and heir to his majesty of Persia. I was with my father, this morning, in our capital city, keeping the festival of the New Year; and now, by surely the most wondrous adventure that man ever had, I find myself in a strange country and must pray you for your protection; for, as I fear, my life is in danger."

13. "Nay, gallant sir," answered the princess, "though it be a strange country to you, it is not a savage one. You will find us as good and kindly people in this kingdom of Bengal as any in your own country; your safety is assured, whether in my palace, or in any part of my father's dominions. I am longing to hear the story of your adventure; for I cannot think how you came from Persia in so short a time.

14. "But I am sure you are very tired; so I will not trouble you now, but will wait till the morning. Now, sir, my women shall arise and make ready a room for you, in which you can

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take your rest, and they shall bring you some refreshments."

15. The women had all been awakened by the sound of talking; and now they arose, and, each one of them taking a lighted wax candle, they conducted the prince to a very beautiful and finely furnished room in another part of the palace.

16. Whilst some of the women made a bed ready for the prince, others served him with a dainty supper; and when he had refreshed himself with the good things they set before him, he lay down to rest, and was soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRINCE BRINGS THE PRINCESS TO PERSIA.

1. The first thing the princess did, when she arose next morning, was to get her women to dress her so that she looked her very best. Then she sent word to the prince, by one of the women, that she would presently come and see him.

2. As soon as the princess heard that Firouz Schah awaited her pleasure, she paid him a visit in the apartment where he had passed the night; and, after mutual greetings, she told him how anxious she was to hear of the strange adventure which had brought him to her palace.

3. The prince then related to her the whole story, and, at the end of it, he said how grateful

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he was for the kindness with which she had received him. What was more, he told her how her beauty and goodness had made him so deeply in love with her, that she was mistress over his heart and over all his thoughts. She blushed to hear these words; and the blush made her look more charming than ever. What Firouz Schah had said was plainly not at all displeasing to her.

4. For the next two months the princess entertained him as her honoured and welcome guest. All sorts of amusements, balls, concerts, parties of pleasure in the beautiful palace gardens, hunting the deer and stags in the park belonging to the palace, made the time pass very pleasantly.

5. Then the prince said that he must really go back and see his father, to relieve him from the anxiety which, without a doubt, he was suffering on his account; and, as Firouz Schah felt that he would be ever so unhappy, if separated from his princess, he begged her to go with him to Persia. She made no answer, but her looks showed that she consented.

6. She was rather afraid, however, to trust herself on the enchanted horse, thinking that the prince might not yet be able to manage it perfectly. But he assured her that he now understood it quite as well as the Indian did, and that she had nothing to fear.

7. Very early next morning, while everybody else in the palace was fast asleep, the prince and

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princess went on the roof, where the enchanted horse had been kept since its coming thither.

8. After Firouz Schah had turned its head towards Persia, he mounted, and then the princess seated herself behind him. As soon as she was comfortably settled, with her arms, for safety's sake, around the prince's waist, he gave a turn to the peg, and the enchanted horse bore them aloft. Away and away they went, with a truly marvellous speed, so that in about two hours and a half they came within sight of the capital of Persia.

9. The prince brought the horse down at a country house of his father's, some little way off the city. He conducted the princess into a handsome sitting-room, and said that he must now go and tell the king, his father, of her arrival, so that she might be received suitably to her rank. Meantime, he added, he would leave her in the care of the steward of the mansion.

10. Having taken leave of the princess, he bade the steward bring him a horse out of the stables; and, mounted on this, Firouz Schah rode to his father's palace. All along the way thither, the people greeted him with shouts of joy; for they had never thought that they would see him again.

11. The king was seated with his council, when Firouz Schah reached the palace; and the king and his councillors were all in mourning for the prince. Judge, then, what were their

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surprise and joy, when he whom they supposed to be dead came into the council chamber! The king was so deeply moved that he shed tears, as he affectionately embraced his son.

12. When the first greetings were over, the king enquired what had become of the horse. This gave Firouz Schah an opportunity of relating how he had travelled to the palace of the Princess of Bengal; how he had fallen in love with that lady, because of her wonderful beauty, grace, and goodness to him; and how he had persuaded her to come back with him to Persia, riding behind him on the enchanted horse.

13. "I have left her, for the time being," continued the prince, "at the villa where you often go for the country air; and she waits to hear that your majesty is agreeable to that union which is our hearts' desire."

"I agree to it gladly, my son," said the king, "and I will myself go to the villa, and escort her hither, so that you can be married this very day."

14. The king then gave orders that the court should go out of mourning, and that a time of public rejoicing should be proclaimed; also that the Indian, who had been kept in prison ever since the prince disappeared, should be brought before him.

"My son having returned," said the king to him, "you are now free. Begone, take your horse, and never let me see you again."

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CHAPTER IV.

THE INDIAN'S REVENGE.

1. The Indian was not slow in departing from the king's presence. He was informed by those who had brought him out of prison, that the enchanted horse was at the villa, some little way from the city; that the prince had come thither upon it, with a beautiful lady riding behind him; that the lady was left there for the time, and that the king was presently going to the villa, to escort her to the city.

2. It occurred to the Indian, when he heard this, that he might now have his revenge on both the king and the prince; for he considered that he had been most unjustly treated by being kept in prison.

3. Without a moment's delay, the Indian set off to the villa which had been named to him, and got there before the king did. He then told the steward that the king had sent him to bring the lady, riding behind him on the enchanted horse, to the great square in front of the palace, where (said the Indian) his majesty was waiting to give her welcome.

4. The steward knew that the Indian had been a prisoner, and so, seeing him now at liberty, he felt no doubt as to the truth of his story of

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having come by the king's orders; nor did the princess see any reason to disbelieve him.

5. The Indian mounted his horse, the steward helped the princess to get up behind him, the peg was turned, and away they went, high up in the air, in the direction of the city.

6. Just then the king was setting forth from his palace, on the road to the villa, and the prince was a little way on in front of him. Imagine their feelings, when they saw the Indian far overhead, bearing off the Princess of Bengal!

7. Words cannot tell the fury of the king, or the grief and dismay of the prince. The king stormed with rage at the insult and injury which the Indian did him; but all his storming was in vain, for, at that height in the air, the Indian was safe from any attempt to stop him. He rode right over the city; and, as the horse went very fast, in a few moments he was out of sight.

8. The king, greatly troubled in spirit, returned into the palace; but Firouz Schah, thinking out some means by which he might perhaps recover his loved one, went on to the villa where he had left her, to be, alas! thus stolen from him.

9. When the prince arrived at the villa, the steward, who was aware of what had happened, cast himself at his feet, fully expecting that the prince would slay him for having let the princess go.

10. "Nay," said Firouz Schah, in a kind tone,

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"arise, my man, and Heaven forbid that I should do you aught of injustice; it was my fault, rather than yours, in not taking enough care for the safety of the princess. Go now, and get me the dress of a dervish, for I intend to travel as one; but be sure you let no one know whom it is for."

11. It so happened that in the neighbourhood there was a house of dervishes, the head of which was a friend of the steward's; so he could readily obtain a dervish's dress, and, putting off his own clothes, the prince disguised himself in this.

12. When it was near night, Firouz Schah set forth on his travels; and, though he was by no means certain which way to go, he had quite made up his mind that he would not come back till he had recovered the princess.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRINCESS AND THE SULTAN OF KASHMIR.*

1. So well did the Indian ride his marvellous steed that, but a few hours after passing over Shiraz, he arrived within the borders of the kingdom of Kashmir, and alighted in a wood near its capital city. Leaving the princess for a time on a grassy plot by a little stream, he went in search of something to eat; for the brisk ride through the upper air had given him a keen appetite.

* Pronounce *kash-mēr'—ē* as in "me."

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2. During his absence, the princess would have tried to escape, but that she felt so very weak and faint, having gone longer than her usual time without refreshment.

In a short time the Indian came back with some provisions; and, after having eaten of them, the princess felt better.

3. But now the man, thinking he had the princess in his power, became very rude and threatening in his manner toward her; so that she screamed out for help, and the sound brought a number of horsemen to the spot. They were the Sultan of Kashmir and his attendants, on the way home from hunting.

4. "What are you doing to this lady?" said the sultan, sternly, to the Indian.

"She is my wife," he answered, in an impudent manner. "And what right have you, or has anyone else, to interfere, when we are having a little difference?"

5. "It is a wicked falsehood," exclaimed the princess, hearing the Indian claim her as his wife. "I am a princess by rank, and was about to be married to the Prince of Persia, when this villain, who is a magician, carried me off on an enchanted horse, and brought me to this country."

6. "Surround him, my men!" exclaimed the sultan, who was persuaded that what the princess said was true. "Surround and execute that evildoer!" This order was immediately carried out

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by the sultan's attendants, for the Indian had no weapons with which to defend himself.

7. A horse was then brought for the princess, and the sultan conducted her to his palace. There he appointed some very handsome apartments for her use, indeed, next to his own, the handsomest in the palace. He also set apart a great number of women slaves to wait upon her, and to see to all her wants.

8. "Princess," he said, when he had escorted her to her apartments, "I am sure you must be ever so tired, and need a rest; I will leave you now, but will come again to-morrow, and then you can tell me all about your strange adventure, and especially about your ride on the enchanted horse, concerning which I greatly desire to be informed."

9. Now, being smitten with the great beauty and charm of the princess, the Sultan of Kashmir had already decided to marry her on the following day. When he came to see her in the morning, he told her of his intention, and said he hoped that she would not object. She was so overcome to hear this, that she fainted away.

10. It was a long time before the sultan, aided by the waiting women, could bring her out of her swoon. When she did come to herself, it occurred to her that there was one way by which she could prevent the proposed marriage; she would pretend to have gone mad.

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11. Accordingly, she began to say the silliest things, and made as if she were going to set upon the sultan and do him some bodily harm. The longer he stayed in the apartment of the princess, the wilder she became; so that at length he left her to the care of her waiting women, whom he strictly charged to give their mistress every possible attention.

12. For day after day the princess kept up her pretence of being out of her mind. The sultan hoped for an improvement; but, so far from there being any, she seemed to get worse and worse. At length he called his doctors together, and asked them if something could not be done for the poor lady.

13. The doctors said that, before they could venture an opinion, they must see the patient; so they were allowed to go, one at a time, into the room where the princess was.

14. The princess knew that the doctors would, first of all, want to feel her pulse; and she foresaw that, when they did so, they would find out that there was nothing the matter with her, and that she was only shamming.

So, as each doctor entered the room, she acted like a furious madwoman, and made as if she would tear at their faces, if they came near her. Not one of them dared to do so.

15. As the court doctors could do nothing for the cure of the princess, the sultan sent for those

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who had the best name for skill in the city. But these were of as little good as the former. Nor was it less in vain that the sultan brought the most famous medical men from the other cities of Kashmir.

16. At length the sultan sent express messengers into the neighbouring kingdoms, carrying written accounts of the princess's case to the best-known doctors, and promising a very handsome fee to the one who could make her well again.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCESS IS RESCUED.

1. Meantime the Prince of Persia had been sorrowfully journeying from country to country, in search of his lost princess.

At every city and town that he came to, he kept his ears open for any news of her; and, in course of time, he arrived at an Indian city, where he heard the people talk about a Princess of Bengal, who, unhappily, had gone out of her mind on the very day that she was to have married the Sultan of Kashmir.

2. This was enough for the prince; he had never heard of more than one princess at the court of Bengal, and so he felt certain that the Princess of Bengal referred to was the one whom

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he sought. Without delay he set off for the capital of Kashmir.

3. On reaching that city, he put up at an inn; and here he heard how the Princess of Bengal had been brought into that country by an Indian magician, who rode on an enchanted horse.

4. No doubt was now left in his mind that the Princess of Bengal, who was said to have gone mad on her wedding-day, was his beloved one. He guessed, too, that her madness was only pretended, as a means of escaping the marriage.

5. He obtained the sort of robes that doctors used to wear at that time; and, besides, he had allowed his beard to grow, whilst on his travels, so that, in his new disguise, he might very well pass as a medical man.

6. The next day, Firouz Schah went to the palace, and asked one of the chief officers to conduct him to the sultan; for he had, said he, certain remedies which would be sure to make the princess quite well.

7. He was, accordingly, brought before the sultan, who was glad to receive him, as no doctor had lately called at the palace. The sultan explained that, as the sight of a doctor made the princess worse, he must see her from a place where she could not see him; and then led the way to a little balcony from which there was a view of the princess's apartment.

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8. When Firouz Schah peeped through the lattice of the balcony, he saw his princess looking very downcast, and with tears in her eyes. She was seated, and was softly singing a song in which she mourned that she was parted from her beloved one. He now knew for certain that her madness was but pretended, and pretended, too, for his sake, that she might keep faithful to him.

9. On going back to the sultan, Firouz Schah told him that it would be necessary to have a talk with the princess, alone and without any onlooker; and he believed, added the supposed doctor, that he should have none of the trouble with her which other medical men had experienced.

10. So Firouz Schah was admitted into the princess's apartment; and no sooner did she see him than, supposing him to be a fresh doctor, she began to act the furious madwoman. But he drew near her, and said very softly, so that no one else could hear, "I am no doctor, but your own prince, come to set you free."

11. She had not known him at first, because of his doctor's robes, and also the long beard which he had grown since she last saw him. But now she recognized his voice and features, and was so overcome with joy that for some time she could not utter a word.

12. The prince briefly explained to her how, after having seen her carried off by the Indian, he had set out on a journey, resolved never to

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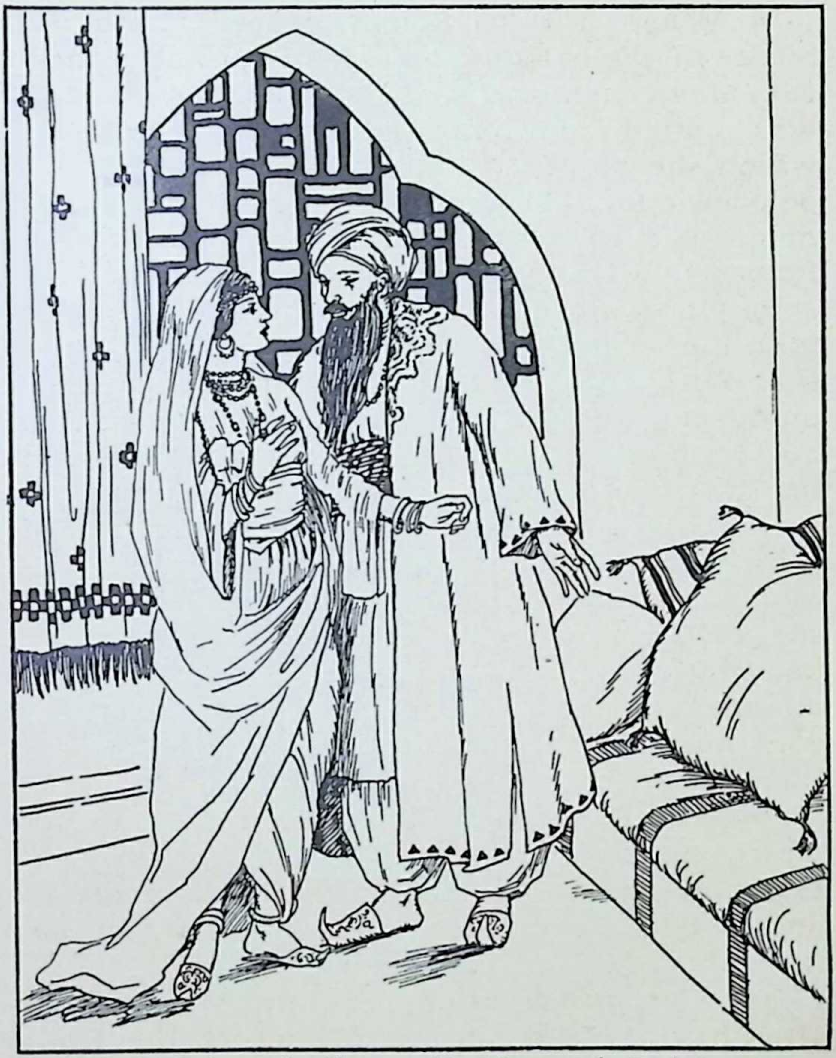

'He drew near her, and said very softly, "I am no doctor, but your own prince, come to set you free."'—*Page* 22.

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go back till she was found; he told her also how he came to hear of her in a certain Indian city, after which he hastened to the capital of Kashmir.

Then the princess, in her turn, told what had befallen herself, since Firouz Schah last saw her.

13. "What became of the enchanted horse?" asked the prince, when she had done.

"I know not," she replied, "but, as I informed the sultan of its magical quality, it is not likely that he has parted with it."

"I shall need it to take you back to Persia," said Firouz Schah, "and must contrive some means to obtain it."

14. It was then agreed between them that, on the following day, the princess should pretend to be much better, and should accordingly receive a visit from the sultan, whom Firouz Schah would bring to her apartment.

15. The sultan was indeed delighted, the next day, to see the patient looking so much better, and told her to do everything the doctor directed; in which case she would soon, no doubt, be quite well. Then, lest he should at all hinder her progress, the sultan went out of the room, without waiting for her to reply.

16. "Might I ask your majesty," said the prince, as they went along together, "how her highness came to be in Kashmir, so far from her own country of Bengal, yet, as it would seem, with none to attend upon her?"

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17. The prince's purpose was, of course, to turn the talk to the enchanted horse, that he might get to know where it was.

The sultan replied quite frankly, and, having narrated the manner of the princess's coming, said that he had put the enchanted horse in his treasury.

18. "Now, sire," exclaimed Firouz Schah, as if he had made an important discovery, "now have I found the means of making her highness quite well, and that speedily. She came hither, you say, on an enchanted horse. It is plain to me that some of that enchantment, entering into her system, has caused her illness. I have certain perfumes, by burning which I can scatter that enchantment to the winds.

19. "Give orders, I pray you, sire, that the horse be put in the middle of the square before the palace. Then, in sight of you and all the people of the city, I will, in a very few moments, make her highness as well, both in body and mind, as ever she was in her life.

20. "Your majesty, I promise you, it shall be the rarest spectacle! And I would beg leave to suggest that, in honour of the occasion, the princess should wear the finest jewels that are in your majesty's treasury."

To all this the sultan readily agreed.

21. Next day the enchanted horse was put in the middle of the palace square, and crowds of

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people came to see what wonderful things would happen. The sultan's guards kept a clear space round about the horse.

22. The sultan and the chief officers of the court took their places in a gallery which had been put up for them. Next came the Princess of Bengal with her waiting women, who helped her to mount the horse.

23. Then the supposed doctor had a number of iron vessels, containing fire, put around the horse; and into each of them he threw a perfume, so that delicious odours spread through the square, greatly to the pleasure of all the people.

After that, with eyes bent on the ground, and hands placed upon his breast, he paced three times round the horse, pretending to utter words of magic.

24. Presently a great cloud of smoke arose from the vessels of fire, so thick that the princess could hardly be seen; and, at that moment, Firouz Schah leapt upon the horse, taking his seat behind her.

25. He bent forward, and gave a turn to the peg; whereupon the horse arose at its usual rapid rate. Whilst he was still within speaking distance of the sultan, the prince called out in a loud voice, "Sultan of Kashmir, when next you wish to marry a princess who has had to appeal to you for protection, get her consent first."

26. The Prince of Persia arrived in his own

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land on the same day; and, as you may be sure, he did not leave the princess in a country mansion this time, but went straight to his father's palace.

27. As soon as arrangements could be made, the wedding took place; and a very splendid affair it was. Henceforth the happiness of the Prince of Persia and the Princess of Bengal was complete.

THE STORY OF PRINCE AHMED.

CHAPTER I.

THE THREE PRINCES.

A CERTAIN Indian sultan had three sons, the eldest of whom was named Houssain,* the second Ali,† and the youngest Ahmed.‡

2. The sultan's niece was also living at the court, her father, the sultan's younger brother, having died when she was quite a little child. She had been brought up with the three princes; and, as she was now a very beautiful, agreeable, and clever young woman, all three were deeply in love with her.

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* Pronounce *hoo-sān'—oo* as in "moon"; *ā* as in "mate."
† " *ā'-lē—ā* as in "father"; *ē* as in "enough."
‡ " *ā'-mĕd—ā* as in "father"; *ĕ* as in "met."

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3. This came to the sultan's knowledge, and, calling his sons before him, he said:

"My sons, I am aware of your attachment to your cousin the princess, and I have thought out a plan by which I may fairly decide who shall have her for his wife. You know, of course, that I am very fond of rare and curious articles. Well, my sons, you shall now go on your travels, each to a different land; and the one who brings me back the rarest article shall marry the princess."

4. The sons agreed; and then the sultan gave each of them a large sum of money, enough to pay all expenses of travelling and to purchase the rarest article they could find. The same day the princes took leave of their father, and rode together out of the city. They were dressed as merchants, and each had a man to attend him.

5. The princes went as far as an inn where the road branched out in three different directions. Here they put up for the night, and at supper they agreed that, a year from that time, they would meet at the inn, and go together to their father. Next morning, at daybreak, they bade one another farewell; and, each choosing a different road, they set off on their travels.

6. Prince Houssain had often heard of the great riches of the kingdom of Bisnagar;* so he

* Pronounce Bi-nd-gár'—i as in "it"; á as in "father." Bisnagar is a city in the native state of Baroda (Bombay Presidency, India).

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took his way thither, and in three months arrived at its capital city, which has the same name as the country. There he put up at an inn where foreign merchants could stay; and, next morning, he went to visit one of the quarters of the city where the shops were.

7. After having walked about for some time, looking at the very rich wares in the shops, the prince felt rather tired. Going up to a shop-keeper, he asked if he might sit down awhile in the shop; and to this the man gave a very civil consent.

8. Whilst he was resting, the prince heard a crier calling out that a carpet was for sale at thirty purses.* As the carpet was only about six feet square, and seemed of no special quality, such a huge price, thought the prince, was out of all reason.

9. He called the crier into the shop, and, after having examined the carpet, said that he could not understand why so much should be asked for it.

"Then you will be surprised, sir," said the crier, "to hear that I am under orders not to part with it for less than forty purses."

10. "There must be something more about this carpet than meets the eye," the prince remarked.

"Ah! you have hit it now, sir," was the reply.

* A purse of gold was of the value of about £90.

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"There *is* a great deal more. You have only to get on this carpet, and, wherever you wish to go to, you will be wafted there, together with the carpet, in less time than it takes me to tell you."

11. "If this be so," cried the prince, "I will gladly pay you forty purses, and a present for yourself besides."

"You can soon see, sir, whether I speak truth or not. I don't suppose that you have so much as forty purses upon you, and I must go with you to your inn to have payment. Well, if the master of this shop will allow us, we will go into the back part of it, and seat ourselves on the carpet. Then you shall wish yourself in your room at the inn; and if we are not there in a trice, you need not purchase."

12. The prince agreed. When he and the crier had sat down on the carpet, he wished himself in his room; and immediately he was there! He was so delighted that he paid the crier forty purses on the spot, and gave him twenty more for himself.

"Now surely," thought the prince, "I have the rarest article in the world. My brothers cannot get anything to equal this, and I am sure of the hand of my dear cousin."

13. A good part of the rest of the twelvemonth he spent in seeing the sights of the city and kingdom of Bisnagar. Then he felt that he

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wanted to be nearer the princess. So, having settled for his room with the master of the inn, he seated himself on the magic carpet, and formed the wish to be at the place where he had agreed to meet his brothers.

His arrival followed closely upon his wish; and, taking up his abode in that place as a merchant, he waited for his brothers to come.

14. Now Prince Ali, the sultan's second son, had fallen in with a caravan, a few days after parting from his brothers, and travelled in its company to Shiraz, which was then the capital of Persia.

15. The day after reaching Shiraz, he went for a walk in that part of the city where jewels, and silk stuffs, and other costly goods were sold, and, amongst the criers who were calling out what wares they had for sale, he heard one that cried a small ivory tube, about a foot long, at the price of thirty purses.

16. Prince Ali enquired of one of the shopkeepers whether the man was in his right senses, to ask such an absurd price for so common an article.

"If he is not, sir," replied the shopkeeper, "he has gone crazy since yesterday. For he was then reckoned one of the best of our criers; and when anything of extra value has been for sale, he has had the crying of it. But stay, sir; come and sit down on my sofa, and when the

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man passes, you can call him into the shop, and examine the article for yourself."

17. Prince Ali had been seated but a few minutes, when the crier passed by; and the shopkeeper, calling him by name, bade him come in.

"This gentleman," said the shopkeeper, pointing to the prince, "has some doubts as to your being in your right mind, since he hears you putting a price of thirty purses on a small ivory tube."

18. "You are not the first one of that opinion," said the crier to Prince Ali. "But let me tell you that this is no common ivory tube. You see it has a glass fitted at each end. Now, if you look through one of these glasses, you will be able to see whatever you may desire to look upon."

19. "If this be true, I will own at once that I was mistaken in my opinion," answered the prince. "Show me which end I am to look through." The crier showed him; then he looked, desiring to see the sultan, his father, and, sure enough, he at once saw him, seated in the midst of his council.

20. Next he desired to see the princess, his cousin; and, looking again through the glass, he saw her as she sat laughing and talking with her waiting women.

"I was quite wrong in what I thought about you," exclaimed the prince. "I should like to

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buy that tube; tell me the exact sum for which the present owner will part with it."

21. The crier replied that his orders were to take nothing less than forty purses for it.

"Come with me to my inn, then," said the prince, "and you shall have payment in full."

22. The crier accordingly went with the prince, the forty purses of gold were handed over to him, and Ali became the happy possessor of the ivory tube. "Now," he said to himself, "I am certain to win my cousin; for my brothers will never get anything so wonderful as this."

23. He had to wait for some time before the caravan with which he had come was ready to return to India; and, meanwhile, he amused himself with seeing all that was worth notice in Shiraz and the country round about.

24. At length the merchants of the caravan had done their business; and Prince Ali set out with them. After several months' journey, he arrived without mishap at the place where he had agreed to meet his brothers. Prince Houssain was already there; but Prince Ahmed had not yet come, so together they waited for him.

25. Now Prince Ahmed had taken his way to a great city called Samarkand;* and, like both his brothers, he went into the market on the morning after his arrival. There he heard a

* Pronounce *sd-mdr-kdnd'—d* as in "father." A city of Turkestan (now part of Russian Central Asia).

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crier offering an artificial apple for sale at thirty-five purses.

26. "This must be a most uncommon apple, to be worth thirty-five gold purses," said the prince to the crier. "Pray let me have a look at it."

"Sir," answered the crier, "you are right. This *is* a most uncommon apple, though nothing much to look at. It will cure any disease, no matter how deadly. A sick person, though he be at death's door, has only to smell this apple, and on the instant he is well again."

27. "Truly a wonderful apple," said the prince, "if what you say is true! But how am I to know that you are not deceiving me?"

"Why, sir," the crier rejoined, "ask any of the merchants in Samarkand, and they will bear me out in my statement. There are some of them who would not be alive to-day, were it not for this apple. It has been made up by a wise man who spent many years in the study of herbs; but he died some little time since——"

28. "Ah!" cried Ahmed, interrupting, "the remedy did not act in his own case, then."

"He did not have time to use it, sir," explained the crier, "the attack of illness coming on him so suddenly. He died, as I said; and his widow, being left with several young children, wishes to dispose of the apple, to provide for herself and her family."

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29. A number of persons had gathered round, and one of them said that a friend of his was lying very ill indeed, and he would be glad if the power of the apple could be put to the proof on this sufferer.

"If it cures him," said Prince Ahmed, "I'll give you forty purses for it."

"Done, sir!" said the crier. "I have no doubt of the result, for it has never yet failed to bring about a cure."

30. So the apple was taken to the room where the sick man lay; and, after smelling at it, he became quite well. This satisfied the prince that the crier had not deceived him. He paid over the forty purses of gold, received the apple, and, feeling sure that he would have the princess for his wife, he returned to India with the next caravan going thither from Samarkand.

31. When all three brothers were met together at the appointed place, they proceeded to show one another the rare and wonderful objects they had brought. Prince Houssain explained that his carpet, though it looked such a common piece, had the magic power of carrying anybody seated upon it wherever he might wish to go.

32. "Very wonderful indeed," said Prince Ali, "but I have something here which is not less so;" and then he told his brothers about the ivory tube. "Take it," he added, "and look through it for yourselves."

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33. Prince Houssain, being the eldest, took the tube first of all, and desired to see the princess, his cousin. A look of alarm then came on his face, much to the surprise of his brothers.

34. Before they could ask him the reason, he exclaimed: "Oh, brothers, our travels have been all in vain! I have seen the princess lying at point of death, and her waiting women are about her bed, all in tears that she must presently be lost to them."

35. Prince Ali now looked through the tube, and he was as distressed as Prince Houssain to see how ill the princess was.

Prince Ahmed also looked, and then he exclaimed: "Be not so cast down, my brothers. If we can only get there in time, I am able to bring the princess back to perfect health."

36. With these words he brought forth the artificial apple. "Look," said he, "this will effect a certain cure. She has but to smell at this, and she is well. I have seen it act before, in what seemed as hopeless a case. Let us hasten to her bedside."

37. "We can be there as in the twinkling of an eye," quickly answered Prince Houssain. "Seat yourselves, brothers, on this carpet; there is room for all three of us. And then away to our dear cousin's sickroom!"

38. They took their places on the carpet; and then, as each one's mind was bent on one and

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the same thing, they sped so fast that hardly any time at all seemed to pass between their start and their arrival.

39. You can imagine how startled the waiting women were to find the three princes suddenly in the midst of them. But it was not a time to explain things. Ahmed hastened to the bedside, and put the apple so that the princess could smell it.

40. In a few minutes she raised herself in bed, and told her women that she wanted to be dressed. She was now quite well; and, being informed by her women of what Prince Ahmed had done for her, she told him how very thankful she was to him, and how glad she was to see him and his brothers again.

41. The princes now went to pay their respects to their father, who had already been told of their arrival and of the happy change it had brought about in the condition of the princess.

42. Then Prince Houssain presented him with the carpet, telling him of its wonderful quality. Prince Ali did the like with the ivory tube, and Prince Ahmed with the artificial apple.

The sultan listened with close attention to what each one had to say about the rarity he had brought; and then he was silent for some time, seeming to be wrapped in thought.

43. At length he addressed them in these words: "My sons, I cannot in justice give the

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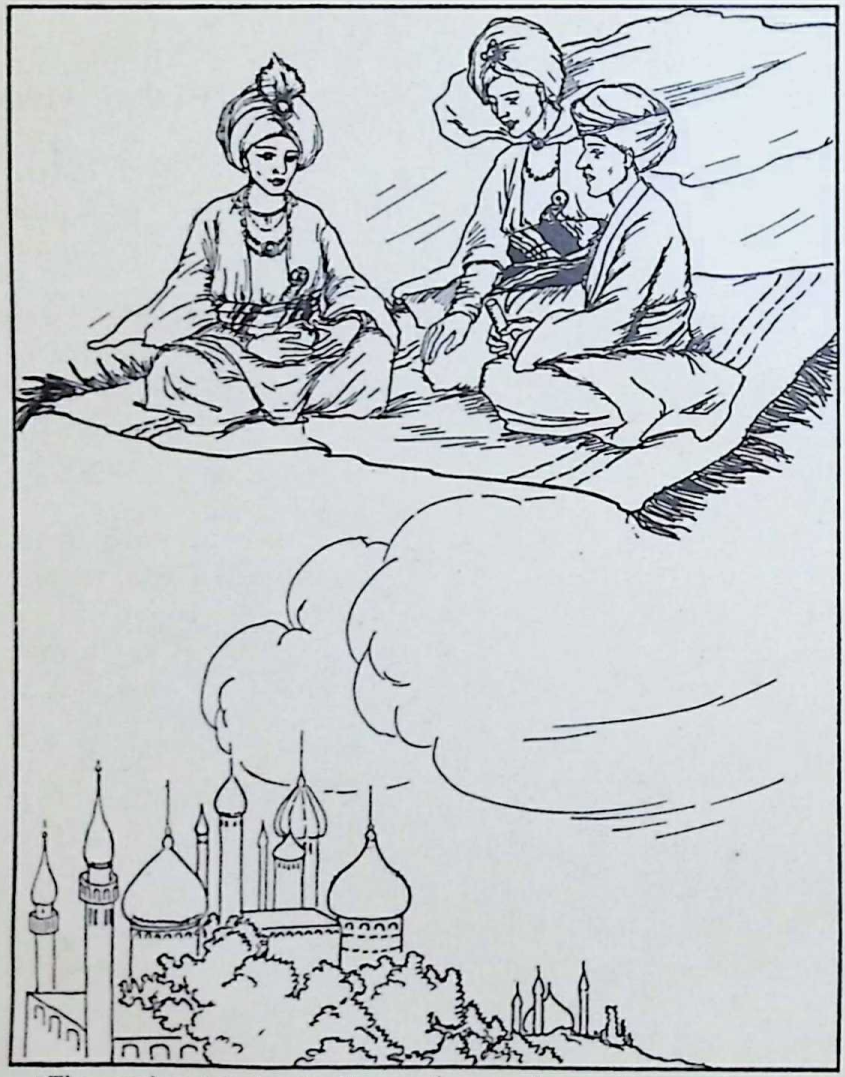

'They sped so fast that hardly any time at all seemed to pass between their start and their arrival.'—*Page* 37.

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princess in marriage to any of you. It is true that she owes a great debt to Prince Ahmed, for having cured her with the apple. But of what good would the apple have been, had not you seen her first through the ivory tube, and learnt how ill she was? And neither tube nor apple would have been of service but for the carpet which brought you hither so quickly.

44. "She therefore owes as much to one as to another, and I must have some other means of deciding who shall be her husband. Go, each one of you, to the plain outside the city walls, taking a bow and a single arrow. The one who shoots farthest shall have the princess."

45. The princes did as their father said, and, very shortly afterwards, he followed them to the plain. Prince Houssain, being the eldest, drew the bow first of all; then Prince Ali, whose arrow went a little beyond Houssain's; and lastly, Prince Ahmed, whose arrow was not seen to fall, and though diligent search was made for it, it could nowhere be found. The sultan therefore decided that Prince Ali had won, and in a few days he was married to the princess.

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CHAPTER II.

THE FAIRY PARIBANOU.*

1. Prince Houssain was so cast down at his loss, that he left the court, gave up his rights to the throne, and became a hermit.

2. Prince Ahmed was also sorry, but not so cast down as his brother. He made up his mind that he would somehow find his arrow; so he went to the spots where Prince Houssain's arrow and Prince Ali's had been picked up, and then walked straight on, looking to the right and the left of him, in search of his own.

3. At length, having gone a good distance, he came to some very high and steep rocks, and here he saw an arrow lying on the ground. On examining it, he found that it was certainly his own. "But," said he to himself, "neither I nor anybody else could have shot it this distance. There is some mystery in this, which I will try to solve; for some good fortune may come to me, if I do so, and it may make up for what I have lost."

4. Now there were many hollows in the rocks; and, going into one of them, the prince saw an iron door in the wall of the rock. Pushing

* Pronounce *pá-ré-bá'-noo*—*á* as in "father"; *é* as in "me"; *oo* as in "moon." The name is Persian for "fairy lady."

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against it, he found it opened inwards, and he entered.

5. A gentle slope led from the door, and he walked down it some fifty or sixty paces, till he came to a large opening, passing through which he found himself in the entrance hall of a very splendid palace.

6. At that moment there appeared a lady of surprising beauty and also very handsomely robed, followed by a number of waiting women. The prince was about to pay his respects to the lady, who was plainly the mistress of the palace, when she spoke to him first, saying, "Come, Prince Ahmed, you are welcome."

7. He was very glad to hear this, for he was afraid that curiosity had perhaps led him too far. Bidden by the lady, he followed her into the adjoining saloon, and sat down beside her on the sofa at its upper end.

8. "Prince," she said to him, "you of course know that, besides people of your own race, there are powerful beings called genii inhabiting the world. I am daughter of the most powerful of these, and my name is Paribanou. Now I know all about you and your brothers; it was I who caused the magic carpet to be put up for sale at Bisnagar, and likewise the ivory tube at Shiraz, and the artificial apple at Samarkand.

9. "I felt that you deserved a better fortune than to be wedded to the princess, your cousin.

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Therefore when you shot the arrow, I took hold of it and sped it through the air till it struck against the rocks beneath which you found it. And now, Prince Ahmed, your fortune is in your own hands; you have the chance of being happier than you have ever been."

The fairy Paribanou blushed as she said these last words, and then gazed upon the floor.

10. "Madam," the prince quickly made answer, "if I may be permitted to look upon, and to admire, your grace and beauty for the rest of my days, I shall indeed be the happiest of men. Make me therefore your slave."

"Nay, not as a slave would I have you live here," said the fairy, "but as my husband; and this palace and all my wealth shall be yours as well as mine."

11. Then she offered him her hand; and, while the prince held it, she said, "Will you now, Prince Ahmed, pledge your faith to me, as I pledge mine to you?"

"Assuredly, madam," replied the prince, "for what could delight me more?"

12. "Then," said Paribanou, "you are from henceforth my husband. Whilst they are making ready our wedding feast for this evening, I will show you over the various rooms of the palace. But first they shall bring you a little refreshment."

Some of the waiting women then went out of

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the saloon, and shortly returned with several dishes and some wine.

13. Having refreshed himself, for he had had nothing since the previous day, the prince went with his fairy bride through the various rooms of the palace; and, indeed, they were so richly furnished, and so splendid with all manner of precious stones, that he exclaimed, "Nothing else in the world can equal this; never before have I set eyes on such wealth, such beauty, such magnificence!"

14. "It is beautiful, I know," answered the fairy. "But what would you say, if you saw the palaces of the chief of the genii, which surpass this, just as mine surpasses the palaces of men? And I want you to see my garden as well. But we will leave that for another day; it is time that we sat down at our wedding feast."

15. Paribanou then took him into the hall where the feast was spread. It was an apartment not less splendid than any he had already seen, and was very brightly lit up with scores and scores of lights, all arranged in perfect order.

16. The prince and his fairy bride seated themselves at table; and a number of ladies, all very fair to look upon, and in rich attire, played on instruments of music, and sang, whilst the wedding feast was held.

17. Paribanou helped the prince to the nicest dishes, and told him the names of them. They

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were all new to him, and he relished them immensely, saying that he had never had anything nearly so delicious whilst he dwelt among mortals.

Fruits and sweetmeats were put on for dessert, and wines also, which the prince praised equally with the rest of the banquet.

18. After dessert, the table was taken away, and Paribanou and the prince made themselves comfortable on a sofa with soft cushions of some rich silk stuff. Then a goodly number of genii and fairies came in, and entertained them with a dance, the like of which Prince Ahmed had never seen before.

19. The wedding feast was continued for several days, and a great variety of entertainments given; for it was the fairy's purpose to convince Prince Ahmed that nowhere else in the world could he enjoy himself so much as in that palace. Indeed, he was quite persuaded of this, and his love for the fairy grew from day to day.

20. Six months passed by; and then the prince felt that he would like to go and see his father, of whom he had always been very fond. He mentioned this to the fairy, and asked if she would mind his going away for a time.

21. Now Paribanou had hoped that the prince would never want to leave her; and she was much disappointed to hear his request.

"Ah!" she cried, "can it be, my prince, that you love me less than you did? Have I not

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done all I could to please you and make you happy?"

22. "You have indeed, my queen," replied Prince Ahmed, "and I am sorry if what I said has offended you. It is only that I should like to relieve the mind of my father, who, I know, is very anxious on account of my long absence, and most likely believes me to be dead."

23. For the present, the prince said no more on the matter, and the fairy was well pleased. But, at various times after this, he led their conversation round to his father, and spoke of the sultan's goodness and kindness, especially to himself; and he did this, hoping that she would at length give him leave to visit so excellent a father.

CHAPTER III.

PRINCE AHMED AND HIS FATHER.

1. The sultan was, indeed, greatly grieved over his son's absence; he had sent in search of him to all parts of his kingdom, but to no purpose. At length he called upon his vizier to help him and advise him what to do for the best.

2. The vizier said that he had heard of a certain sorceress or "wise woman," who was very well spoken of for her skill in magic arts, and advised that her help should be obtained in the search for the prince. The sultan was quite

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willing; and, having learnt where the wise woman was, the vizier went to fetch her.

3. When she was brought into the sultan's presence, he said to her, "You are doubtless aware that I am in great distress of mind because of the long absence of my beloved son, Prince Ahmed. You have the fame of a wise woman; can you tell me whether the prince is alive or dead, where he is, and what he is doing?"

4. The wise woman asked that she might be given till the next day to inform herself on these points; and the sultan readily agreed, saying that she should be well rewarded if her answers were what he wanted them to be.

5. When the wise woman returned on the following day, she had to confess that, though she had used all her magic arts, there was but one thing she could find out about Prince Ahmed, namely, that he was yet alive; where he was, she could not say. This answer left the sultan in almost as much distress of mind as before.

6. Now the fairy Paribanou felt, at length, that she was acting wrongly in not letting Prince Ahmed go and see his father; and she felt assured, too, that it was from no want of love for her that he desired to do so.

7. So, one day, the fairy told Prince Ahmed that she had thought over the matter, and had decided that he might go and see his father, on condition that he did not stay away for long.

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"My queen," he answered, "I am indeed grateful to you; and you may be sure that my absence will not be a long one, for I feel that I cannot live away from you."

8. "Go, dear Ahmed, whenever you please," said the fairy. "But I advise you not to mention that you are married to me, nor to say where you have been staying. Just tell your father that you have been quite well and happy, and that your visit is to relieve him from any uneasiness about you."

9. Prince Ahmed now took leave of the fairy, and, attended by twenty horsemen, he rode off to his father's palace. The distance was only about twelve miles; and he soon arrived at the city, where the crowds shouted for joy to see their long-lost prince come back to them.

10. He hastened into his father's presence, and greatly did his father rejoice to see him alive and well. "But," said the sultan, "you have done wrong to stay away all this time, without letting me know where you were; you have caused me deep grief."

11. Prince Ahmed excused himself by relating how he had gone in search of his arrow, and had walked on and on till he came to some high, steep rocks, at the foot of which he found it.

"What followed my finding of the arrow," said the prince, "is a mystery which I may not open to you. But let me assure you that I have

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been quite happy, except, indeed, for the thought of the uneasiness which my absence was causing you. And now let me ask this one favour—that I may, from time to time, come and see you and pay my dutiful respects."

12. "That you may certainly do," replied the sultan. "But tell me, my dear boy, how I am to get to know whether you are well or ill, supposing you do not come for a long while."

"To tell you that, father," said the prince, "would be to open the mystery on which I may not speak to you. But never fear that I shall not come and see you quite often enough."

13. "Well, I will press you no further on the matter," his majesty answered. "I will say but this: I am delighted to see you now, and whenever you please to come again, you will be equally welcome."

14. After three days Prince Ahmed returned to his fairy wife, who was greatly pleased by his quick return, not having expected him back so soon; and he related to her all that had passed between the sultan and himself.

15. Carrying out his promise, the prince made it a practice, after this, to go and see his father once a month; and each time he was dressed and mounted in better style than before, and so were the twenty horsemen who attended upon him.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE SORCERESS.

1. Now some of the viziers urged upon the sultan that he ought to inform himself of the prince's abode, and in what manner the prince was able to make such a show of grandeur, even though no allowance whatever was made to him by the sultan.

2. So the sultan sent again for the sorceress, at a time when Prince Ahmed was on his monthly visit; and he spoke to her as follows.

"My son is unwilling to tell me where he lives, and I do not want to force him to do so. But I feel sure that you have cunning enough to find out for me. He is here at present, and will be off at daybreak to-morrow. Keep watch on the road he takes, notice where he goes to, and then bring me word."

3. The sorceress, being aware of the spot where Prince Ahmed had found his arrow, went and hid herself among the rocks; and when he came next morning, she watched him till he was out of sight.

4. The rocks were so steep that no one could get over them; so the sorceress judged that the prince had disappeared either into a cavern, or into some underground place where genii and fairies lived.

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5. She now searched through the various openings and hollows in the rocks; but she never saw the iron door through which Prince Ahmed had gone, for it was a door that could be seen only by such as the fairy Paribanou wished to see it.

6. The sorceress went back to the sultan, and informed him of what she had done, adding that, if the sultan would be patient and allow her to follow her plans, she had little doubt of success at last. He agreed, and gave her a costly diamond for a present; but, said he, her reward, if she succeeded, would be much greater.

7. The next month, when it was just before the time for Prince Ahmed to pay his visit, the sorceress went to the place where she had lost sight of him.

On his coming forth from the iron door, next morning, he found the woman lying down, with her head against a rock, and groaning as if in great pain. So he asked her what was the matter, and whether he could help her in any way.

8. Speaking like one who was very weak and ill, she said that she had come from the city, and, while on the road, had fallen ill with fever; so that she could not walk a step farther, but had to lie down in that spot, though there appeared no dwelling place anywhere about, from which help could come to her.

9. "My good woman," said the prince, "you

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are mistaken in supposing so; I will have you taken to a place quite close at hand, where you will be looked after, and made well."

Of course, the illness was only a pretended one; and the sorceress, by this trick, intended to find out where the prince lived, and what was his way of life.

10. She tried, or pretended to try, several times to get up from the ground; but, as she failed, two of the prince's attendants helped her up, and put her on horseback behind another. Then, the iron door being opened for him, the prince rode through, and into the courtyard of Paribanou's palace, and sent word by an attendant that he wished to see the fairy.

11. Paribanou hurried down, wondering what had made the prince turn back. He pointed out the sick woman, whom two of the attendants had taken off the horse, and were supporting. He related how he had found her, and begged that Paribanou would see after her.

12. The fairy told two of her women to carry the stranger into one of the rooms of the palace; and then, speaking softly to the prince, she said, "Unless I am much mistaken, that woman is only pretending to be so ill, and has been sent here for no good to you. But do not let that trouble you, my dear Ahmed; I have power enough to prevent anything being done to your harm."

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13. "I have never done harm to anybody," replied the prince, "and I don't think anybody wants to harm me." He then took leave of the fairy, and went on his way to his father's court.

14. As was said, Paribanou's two women carried the sorceress into a room of the palace. There they made a bed for her on a sofa, and helped her to get into it; then one of them brought her something to drink in a fine china basin.

"There," said the woman, "take this and drink it off. It is water from the Fountain of Lions, and is a certain cure for fevers. In less than an hour you will feel better."

15. After making some difficulty, the sorceress drank the water, and then lay down; the two women covered her up, and left her for a time.

In about an hour they returned, and found the sorceress sitting up. "That's a splendid cure for a fever, the water you brought me," she exclaimed. "I am quite well; so please take me to your mistress, that I may thank her, and then go on my way."

16. Accordingly, the women took her through a number of splendid apartments to the room where Paribanou sat upon a throne of gold, which was studded with diamonds, rubies, and very large pearls. The sight of so much wealth and splendour made the sorceress speechless.

17. "I am very glad to have been of service

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to you, my good woman," said Paribanou. "Perhaps, before you go, you would like to look over the palace; my women will show you everything that is worth seeing."

18. The sorceress bowed down to the floor, and took her leave. She was then shown through the rooms, just as Prince Ahmed had been, when he first came to this place; every now and then she cried out for wonder at what she saw, and she was still more surprised when the women told her that Paribanou had a number of other palaces, no less splendid than this one.

At length the sorceress was brought to the iron door, and was let out; she hastened back to the sultan, well pleased with her success.

19. But when she stood before the sultan, there was a gloomy look upon her face; and the sultan, observing this, said that he supposed she had failed in her errand.

"Far from it, your majesty," replied the sorceress. "The serious look which you notice arises from a cause which I will explain presently. But let me first tell you what I have done."

20. Then she related in full all that had happened, and all that she had seen. "Now, your majesty," she finished up by saying, "I will tell you why I was looking so serious. I am afraid that all this wealth and splendour, which Prince Ahmed shares with the fairy, may prove a misfortune to him. Prince Ahmed him-

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self is good-natured enough, and dutiful in his regard for you; but can we be quite sure that the fairy, his wife, will not make a change in him, and put it into his head to turn you off the throne and take your place on it? It is a matter, your majesty, that should be thought upon."

21. Now certain of the sultan's favourite councillors, who were not friendly to Prince Ahmed, had already tried to make him think evil of his son; and what the sorceress said moved him greatly. He took her to the room where these councillors were, and told them what he had just heard.

22. "What would you do," he asked them, "to guard against this danger of my son's rising up against me?"

"There is only one safe way," said one who spoke on behalf of the rest. "He is here at the court now; have him arrested, and made a close prisoner for the rest of his life."

23. "If I may be allowed to give my opinion," observed the sorceress, "we should act in a far different way. It is well known that genii and fairies can do things far beyond the powers of men. What I recommend is that Prince Ahmed be asked to obtain from his fairy wife certain benefits for your majesty.

24. "For example, get him to apply to the fairy for a pavilion large enough to cover your whole army, and yet so small that it can be

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carried in the hand; look how this will save you trouble and expense when you next go to war. If the prince gets the pavilion, then still other requests may be made to him, such as will at length surpass even the powers of the fairy; then he will be ashamed to appear at court, and will stay with his fairy wife, and you, your majesty, will be safe."

CHAPTER V.

THE SULTAN'S STRANGE REQUESTS.

1. The sultan resolved to do as the sorceress said; and next day, when he saw Prince Ahmed, he remarked, "My dear son, I have been informed of your happy union with a rich and powerful fairy; I wish you joy. And now I have a request to make. You know what trouble and expense I have to provide tents and pavilions, and camels and mules to carry them, when my army takes the field. Well, I want you to obtain from the fairy a pavilion so made that you can hold it in your hand, yet of a size to cover my whole army."

2. Prince Ahmed was much taken aback by his father's words; he owned, however, that the sultan had been correctly informed as to his marriage. "But," he added, "I have not hitherto asked Paribanou for anything, and I do not like to begin doing so. Yet, as the duty of a son is

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to obey his father, I will make the request you mention. I am by no means sure that I shall succeed in obtaining the article; if I do not appear again to pay my respects to you, that will be a token that I have failed."

3. "I should be sorry if you kept away on that account," said the sultan. "But it is plain that you do not know your influence with your fairy wife. You would not refuse anything that she might ask of you, because you love her; and in like manner, as she loves you just as much, she will not refuse what you ask."

4. When the prince returned to the palace of Paribanou, she could see by his expression that something was on his mind, and she asked him what was the matter. For some time he avoided answering her question, and tried to talk of other things; but she pressed him for an answer.

5. "It is this," he said. "Up to now you know that I have been content with your affection for me, and have not asked you for anything further, although I knew the greatness of your power. But now my father wants me to obtain from you a pavilion big enough to shelter all his army in the field, and yet so small that it can be carried in the hand."

6. "If *that* is all," replied Paribanou, smiling, "you need not be in any way uneasy. What the sultan requires is, for me, a mere trifle. And so far are you from troubling me by making this

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request on his behalf, that I shall always make it a pleasure to grant whatever you wish, because of my great love for you."

7. The fairy then called to the woman who was keeper of her treasury, and said, "Nourgihan,* fetch me the largest pavilion that there is in the treasury." Nourgihan obeyed; and, in a minute or two, she appeared with a pavilion so small that not only could she hold it in her hand, but even quite hide it up, if she closed her hand. She gave it to her mistress, and her mistress passed it on to Prince Ahmed.

8. This, the largest pavilion in the treasury! The prince, of course, thought that Paribanou was jesting with him; and she read this in the expression of his face. Laughing, she said to Nourgihan, "Go and put up this pavilion, that the prince may see whether or not it is large enough for his father's purpose."

9. Nourgihan went out and, having got far enough from the palace, put up the pavilion, which, as the prince could plainly see, was of a size to cover twice as great an army as the sultan's.

"You think, no doubt," said the fairy, "that this is too large for your father's requirements. But I must inform you that it will, of itself, stretch out or lessen to the exact size wanted."

10. Nourgihan now took the pavilion down,

* Pronounce *noor-ge-hán'*—*oo* as in "moon"; *e* as in "enough"; *á* as in "father."

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made it as small as when she first brought it out of the treasury, and handed it to the prince. Next morning, he set off on horseback to take it to his father.

11. The sultan could hardly believe his eyes, when he saw the pavilion put up on the plain outside the city. He told his son that he felt very much obliged for this marvellous present. But in his heart there was now a feeling of jealousy toward his son, because Prince Ahmed, by the fairy's help, could do so much more than he himself could. This jealousy grew and grew, as the sultan thought upon the matter; and he again sought the advice of the sorceress.

12. What she said to him in private became known next day, when, in presence of all the people of the court, the sultan said to Prince Ahmed: "My son, there is but one more request I have to make to you, and that is to obtain for me a man not more than a foot and a half high, but with a beard thirty feet long, and carrying on his shoulder a bar of iron that weighs five hundred pounds."

13. The prince pleaded that he could not undertake to find such a one, for he did not believe that a man of this description was to be met with anywhere. But the sultan would take no excuse, saying that the fairy was quite able to grant his request.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE VENGEANCE OF SCHAIBAR.*

1. The following day the prince returned to Paribanou, and told her the whole story.

"Do not be uneasy, my prince," the fairy said to him. "My own brother, who is called Schaibar, exactly answers the description you give; and I will call him hither. I must tell you that he is very fierce and violent, if his temper is roused; but he is a good fellow so long as nothing gives him offence, and he will do whatever I ask him. I will call him hither."

2. Paribanou then ordered her women to put in the entrance hall a vessel full of fire, and also to bring her a gold box in which she kept perfume. She threw some of the perfume on the fire, and a thick smoke arose. A moment or two afterwards, Schaibar made his appearance.

3. He was just as the sultan had described. He was only a foot and a half high, carried a great iron bar over his shoulder, and had a thick beard thirty feet long, with moustaches to match, which went back to his ears.

4. Schaibar, casting a terrible look at Prince Ahmed, said to the fairy: "Who is that man?"

"My husband," she answered. "He is son to

* Pronounce *shâ'-bâr*—*â* as in "mate"; *â* as in "father."

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'Schaibar made his appearance.'—*Page* 59.

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the Sultan of India. When we got married, you were away on one of your expeditions; but, as I heard you were now returned, I called for you. It is on my husband's account that I want you."

5. The dwarf now looked at Prince Ahmed with much kindness, and said, "If there is aught I can do for your husband, it will give me great pleasure."

"The Sultan of India has said that he would like to see you," answered Paribanou. "Will you please let my husband conduct you to the court?"

"Certainly; I am ready," said Schaibar.

6. "It is too late to start now," the fairy remarked. "Wait till to-morrow morning; and, so you may know how matters stand, I will, in the meantime, tell you what has passed between the sultan and his son since our marriage." So she related to him all the circumstances.

7. Very early next morning Schaibar set out with the prince; and, when they came into the sultan's city, the people were so alarmed at the sight of Schaibar that they shut themselves up in their houses. The porters at the palace gates ran away; and so did the officers who kept the doors of the council hall, in which the sultan was then seated on his throne.

8. Schaibar went straight up to the throne, and said to the sultan: "Thou hast asked for me. What wantest thou?"

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Seeing so terrible a figure before him, the sultan put his hands over his eyes, and made no answer. This gave offence to the dwarf; and, before Prince Ahmed could step between them, and pray the dwarf to have patience, Schaibar lifted up his iron bar and let it fall on the sultan's head, so that he was killed.

9. "Where are they," Schaibar then shouted, "who gave the king evil advice regarding his son?" With these words he rushed on the favourite councillors of the sultan, who had been enemies to Prince Ahmed, and set his father against him; and, wielding his iron bar like a quarterstaff, he put them to death.

10. Schaibar went out into the courtyard, accompanied by Prince Ahmed and the grand vizier, whose life, at the prince's earnest request, he had spared. "Where is she," said he to the grand vizier, "that is the worst of all—that sorceress who was my brother-in-law's enemy? Let her be brought before me."

11. Accordingly she was sent for; and Schaibar, having said to her, "This is what comes of giving wicked advice and of feigning sickness," destroyed her with his terrible bar.

12. "And now," shouted Schaibar, "I will destroy the whole city, if my brother-in-law is not straightway proclaimed Sultan of India."

All who heard him, at once called out lustily, "Long live Sultan Ahmed!"

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13. Then Schaibar led Ahmed to the throne, and paid his respects to him as the new sultan; after which he went for his sister, and brought her to the city. Henceforth she was entitled the Sultana of India; and we have every reason to believe that she and Ahmed, for whom she had so great affection, lived happily ever after.

EDITOR'S NOTE.

The ARABIAN NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS (in Arabic, *Alf Laylah wa Laylah, A Thousand Nights and a Night*) is the Arabic representative of a Persian collection of tales called *Hezár Afsáne* (*A Thousand Tales*), about two hundred in number, spread over a thousand nights. This is said to have been compiled either for, or by, a certain Princess Homai, whose personality is wrapped in obscurity, but whose mother (or, it may be, grandmother) is identified with the Esther of the Old Testament.

The "Herodotus of Arabian History," Ali Masûdi, mentions this Persian collection in his principal work, *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems* (943); and, apparently, an Arabic version of it was already in existence.

The origin of this famous collection of tales is as follows: A Persian king had decreed that a new bride should be brought to him every day, and that each one, in turn, should be put to death on the morning after the nuptials. At length he took to wife one Scheherazade, called, in the Arabic version, his grand-vizier's daughter. Some while before daybreak she began telling the sultan a tale, which the dawn and the business of the day interrupted, just when she had raised his interest and curiosity to the highest pitch. Scheherazade had thus anticipated the wiles of modern serial writers. The sultan was anxious to hear the end of the story, and so spared her life for another night. But story followed on story, and Scheherazade managed to survive for a thousand nights; by which time the sultan was well in love with her. He therefore revoked his cruel decree, made her his queen, and would appear to have been happy with her ever after.

The greatest of English—or, one might well say, of European—Arabic scholars, Edward William Lane (1801-76), who lived for years in Cairo entirely among the Arabs, adopting the dress, speech, and manners of one of their *literati*, was of opinion that the *Arabian Nights* was most probably the work of one or two Egyptian authors, about the close of the fifteenth century and beginning of the sixteenth. On the

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other hand, Sir Richard Burton (1821-90), hardly less renowned for his attainments in Arabic, held that it could be attributed to no specific author, and that the tales varied greatly in the period of their origin, the oldest dating from the eighth century, the most modern from the sixteenth.

The view generally held is that the tales, as we have them now, were put together somewhere about 1450, by Egyptian, probably Cairene, hands.

The oldest extant manuscript is of the year 1548; and it was from this that Antoine Galland, a French orientalist and numismatist, Professor of Arabic at the Collège de France, made his French translation, *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, in twelve volumes (Paris, 1704-17), the first rendering in any European language—exceedingly inaccurate, but the basis of the most popular English versions.

The first accurate translation was that made by Lane (1838-40). The first literal and complete one was contained in a monumental series of sixteen volumes (1885-88), by Sir Richard Burton.

Some, at any rate, of the current English versions of *The Nights* are curious examples of prolixity, self-repetition, and involved verbiage—for all the world as if the authors of them had formerly held high positions at the Circumlocution Office during the Tite Barnacle time. Our author has endeavoured to avoid this style, and to re-tell two of the most interesting stories of *The Nights* in as plain and straightforward a manner as possible.—W.H.W.

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2.—Describe shortly the three wonderful things which the princes bought.

3.—Why did the Sultan decide that he could not yet give the princess to any one of the princes, and what fresh test did he think of?

Chapter II.—1. Who was the Fairy Paribanou, and where did Prince Ahmed meet her?

Chapter III.—1. What instructions did the fairy give to the prince when he went to visit his father?

Chapter IV.—1. How did the Sultan obtain news of his son's marriage to Paribanou?

2.—What advice did the sorceress give to the Sultan with regard to Prince Ahmed?

Chapter VI.—1. What was the first request which the Sultan made to Prince Ahmed?

2.—How did Schaibar treat the people at the Court of the Sultan?

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